



Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

A Nonpartisan Public Policy and Research Office of the Connecticut General Assembly

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*With 21 volunteer
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Testimony of

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Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Housing Committee

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Senators Winfield and Osten, Representatives Butler and Rose, and esteemed members of the Housing Committee, we thank you for this opportunity to comment on several bills before you today.

As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the non-partisan, public policy and research office of the General Assembly, devoted to preparing Connecticut for a significantly changed demographic and enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For over twenty years, the Legislative Commission on Aging has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities.

Bills Concerning Housing for Older Adults

- **Proposed Senate Bill No. 170: An Act Protecting Housing for Senior Citizens**
- **Proposed Senate Bill No. 409: An Act Expanding Age-Restricted Housing Options for Elderly Persons**
- **Proposed House Bill No. 5583: An Act Concerning Housing for Elderly Persons**
- **Proposed House Bill No. 6141: An Act Concerning the Expansion of Age-Restricted Housing Options for Elderly Persons**
- **Proposed House Bill No. 6144: An Act Concerning Age-Restricted Housing Options for Elderly Persons**

Connecticut is undergoing a permanent and historic transformation in its demographics: it is aging. Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation with the 3rd longest-lived constituency, and between 2010 and 2040, Connecticut's population of people age 65 and older is expected to grow by 57%. In light of these demographic changes, ensuring that there is adequate supply of affordable, accessible, high-quality of housing for older adults is more important than ever before.



As you know, for decades, older adults and younger persons with disabilities have both resided together in publicly financed housing projects. Through our work, we are aware of the robust discussion of both the potential opportunities and problems that can arise from the co-existence of these two tenant groups. For some older adults, the experience of living in close quarters with younger tenants enhances intergenerational connectivity, social supports and quality of life. For others, it can result in lifestyle clashes and fears, including conflicts, disruptive behaviors, and misconceptions about mental illness.¹

All people deserve to live in an environment where they feel safe and can retain choice, independence and dignity. Accordingly, we appreciate the challenges that some people may experience in what is offered referred to as a “mixed population” setting, and we embrace thoughtful opportunities to expand housing options for older adults in Connecticut. It is equally important that policy strategies foster notions of shared fate, across age and other demographic characteristics, especially as the need for affordable housing continues to rise for the population as a whole.

As a result, the Legislative Commission on Aging makes the following recommendations for any bills concerning expanded housing options for older adults:

- **Provide additional supports to resident service coordinators.** Resident service coordinators (RSCs) facilitate conflict resolution between residents, establish and maintain relationships with community services providers, and help residents live independently, among other roles.¹ Additional supports for RSCs could include increased funding, oversight and mandatory training.
- **Enhance data collection and analysis.** Strategic planning, policy development and resource allocation require data on both housing availability and need among Connecticut residents. Current efforts should streamline and integrate information on federally-funded, state-funded, and privately funded affordable housing projects and initiatives, stratified by age and other demographic characteristics. Further, in 2004 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (LPRIC) conducted a study on the issue.² A follow up to that study would be helpful to determine the effectiveness of implemented recommendations, to identify any recommendations not acted upon but still relevant and to evaluate the impact of the changing housing landscape (e.g. more recent trend toward the 50+ age restricted developments).
- **Promote more quality, affordable housing for all residents.** For Connecticut residents age 65 and older, 40% of home owners and 53% of renters spent at least 30% of their household income on housing. Further, the need for

¹ Conn. Gen. Stat. § 8-114d

² A more extensive analysis of these issues and policy recommendations can be found in a December 2004 report of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, entitled *Mixing Populations in State Elderly/Disabled Housing Projects*. Available at < http://www.cga.ct.gov/2004/pridata/Studies/pdf/Housing_Populations_Final_Report.pdf>

affordable housing is pressing across the lifespan, as among all Connecticut residents, 35% of home owners and 50% of renters spent at least 30% of their household income on housing.² Accordingly, continued annual appropriations to create additional affordable housing in Connecticut are also critical.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment today on these bills.

² US Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

